

Don't Be Deceived

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. My name is you all. I'm the RUF campus minister at the Air Force Academy.

And as you all can imagine, everything in 2020 just looks a little different, right? And our ministry also looks very different this year. More Zoom calls than I care to discuss.

More small groups, more outdoor events, more off-campus events, more face masks, more hand sanitizer. You guys know the drill at this point.

Everything just looks different. The coronavirus has thrown a wrench in our plans, but not in God's plans. And God is still doing some amazing things through our ministry at USAPHA.

Every week, 50 to 75 cadets hear the gospel through RUF. Lives are changing. Hearts are healing. Idolatries are shrinking. And our community is growing.

[0 : 59] Praise God. Thank you guys for your continued prayers, your financial support, for making our ministry possible. I can say sincerely that our ministry would not be possible without Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church.

Thank you guys so much. So it is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. So here's a picture of one of our recent outdoor worship events.

As you can see, it's at Forest Gate Presbyterian. So it's a beautiful thing. Forest Gate has been providing the facility. Village 7 has been providing us transportation and providing a shuttle.

And then Grace and Peace and Cheyenne Mountain have been providing our meals, allowing us to pay for dinner and drinks for our students. It's just a really cool thing to see all the churches in an area come together to make our ministry possible.

Here's another picture. This is our sophomore class. They were recognized recently. So we took them out to Texas Roadhouse and treated them to steak lunches. Anyway, amazing, amazing ministry happening at USAPHA.

[2 : 05] And thank you for being a part of it. Now, a picture may be worth a thousand words, but this morning I'm going to try to use about 3,000 words to paint you a picture.

And I pray that the picture that I paint with my limited finite words is far more meaningful than 3,000 words.

If you could look at a picture of your soul, what do you think that picture would look like? Oscar Wilde, in his novel written in 1890, a novel called *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, he poses this question to his readers in a frightening fashion, in a dramatic way.

The story tells, the novel tells the story of this handsome young man. His name is Dorian Gray, and he has a portrait painted. He's a beautiful young man.

He looks at this portrait of himself, and he realizes that one day he's going to grow old, and he begins to dread this future reality. And so in the pursuit of immortality, Dorian Gray, he makes a wish that his portrait, this beautiful portrait of himself, would grow old so that he could stay young.

[3 : 25] In a sense, he sells his soul to the devil for immortality, and his wish comes true. Now that Dorian is essentially immortal, he starts doing whatever he wants to do, and the things that he wants to do, they're not good things.

After some time, he goes back into this room that he had stored this painting, this portrait, and he looks at the painting, and he realizes that it wasn't just a reflection of his physical decay, but it was also a reflection of his spiritual decay as well.

So all the evil that he had been doing was reflected in this hideous portrait of his soul. And so Dorian does what I think anyone would do in that situation.

He wraps the portrait up. He puts it in the secluded room. He locks the door, and he throws away the key. And then he goes on living a hedonistic lifestyle.

He throws himself into sensual behaviors, experimenting with every vice known to man. Dorian concludes, the only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it.

[4 : 38] And that's exactly what he does time and time again throughout this short novel. Meanwhile, his portrait that's locked away in this room becomes increasingly more hideous and revolting.

The novel illustrates how the person we project to others may be a very different person from who we are inside. So let me ask you the opening question again.

If you could look at a picture of your soul, what would that picture look like? This morning, we're going to look at three scenes. There are unpleasant scenes from the Gospel of Mark, Mark 14. Each unpleasant scene invites us to see ourselves, to see our soul in the disciples. And my friends, it isn't a pretty picture.

Each of the scenes in Mark 14, it paints a picture not only of the disciples, but of ourselves. And it is a portrait that forces each of us to ask the question, what did Jesus get when he got me?

[5 : 49] What did he get when he got me? Mark 14, it's going to make us a little uncomfortable. It'll make us feel a little uneasy.

But the truth is, we desperately need Mark 14. Mark 14 helps us see ourselves rightly. And we need to see ourselves rightly by looking honestly at this portrait of the disciples on the night that Jesus was arrested and betrayed.

Because here's the thing, my friends. You will never feel the weight of the Gospel until you see yourselves in the disciples in Mark 14. And you will never grasp the depths of God's love for you until you see what it cost God to get you.

So if you are willing and able, I invite you to please stand for the reading of God's holy, inerrant, and inspired word. And this is a long passage this morning.

As I said, we're going to look at three scenes and we're going to break them down. Mark 14, verses 26 through 50. All right, here's the first scene. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

[7 : 05] And Jesus said to them, you will all fall away, for it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered. But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.

Peter said to him, even though they fall away, I will not. And Jesus said to him, truly, I tell you this very night before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.

But he said emphatically, if I must die with you, I will not deny you. And they all said the same.

Second scene. And they went to the place called Gethsemane.

And he said to his disciples, sit here while I pray. And he took with him Peter and James and John and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, my soul is very sorrowful, even to death.

Remain here and watch. And going a little further, he fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible for you.

[8 : 08] Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will. And he came and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch for one hour?

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. And again, he went away and prayed, saying the exact same words.

And again, he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy. And they did not know what to answer him. And he came the third time and said to them, are you still sleeping and taking your rest?

It is enough. The hour has come. The son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand. Third scene.

He threw his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. And Jesus said to them, have you come out as against a robber with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day, I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me.

[9 : 38] But let the scriptures be fulfilled. And get this. And they all left him in flood. This is the very word of God.

Let me pray. Heavenly Father, this is a convicting passage as we see ourselves in imperfect disciples.

We pray that you would open our eyes to see our shortcomings, our imperfections, our brokenness, so that we will see our need for a sinless savior.

And it's through his name we pray. Amen. Amen. All right. You may be seated. All right. So the disciples have just left the upper room.

And Jesus takes his disciples to the Mount of Olives. And he reminds them of a prophecy from Zechariah 13. The prophecy went something like this. I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.

[10:39] He reminds them of this ancient prophecy. And he says, it's time. Jesus tells his closest friends, his disciples, for three years, that they were about to deny him.

They were about to fall away. They were about to desert him. And in response, the disciples essentially say, well, that's just not going to happen, Jesus. We would never desert you. We would never deny you. That prophecy must have been talking about other sheep. Like, remember all those people at your triumphal entry? Yeah, I was probably talking about them. Because look, it hasn't even been that long. And we're the only ones left. Where are they? They're the sheep that have been scattered. We're still with you. And we're with you to the end. They essentially say, till death do us part. Peter goes a step further. It's as if Peter pulls Jesus aside and has like this quiet, private conversation.

[11:40] And Peter doesn't hesitate to throw all of his buddies under the bus. Peter goes, I know these guys. And I hate to say it, Jesus, but your prophecy is probably right.

I wouldn't be surprised if they all fall away. But I'm different. I'm better. I'm not like them. My faith is true. My faith is unshakable. When they fall away, which they probably will, I won't fall away. I'm with you, Jesus.

I'm with you to the end. After hearing this, Jesus has to get specific with Peter. Right? And so he says, Peter, not only will you desert me, but you will deny me three times before the rooster crows twice.

This first scene is a portrait of denial. Peter doesn't think so, right? Peter says, yeah, right. That's not going to happen. I'm different. I'm better.

[12:45] My faith is real. I actually get it. In verses 66 through 72, Mark, the author of this gospel, he gives us front row seats to this encounter.

Peter, he comes across a harmless servant girl. And she is going to lob three juicy softballs his way. She says, hey, aren't you one of his disciples?

I think I've seen you with Jesus. And Peter replies, no. You must be thinking of someone else. I don't know what you're talking about.

Strike one. Second pitch is thrown. No, seriously, aren't you one of his disciples? I swear I've seen you before. And Peter replies, I don't know what you're talking about.

I don't know him. I'm positive I am not one of his followers. Strike two. And then the third pitch, the third juicy softball is thrown his way.

[13:54] She says, how many? She says, essentially, don't lie to me. I know I've seen you with Jesus before. Just tell the truth.

I won't do anything. And what does Peter say? The text says, he goes, I swear to God, I don't know him. Strike three.

And the rooster crows a second time. Luke, in his gospel, he fills us in on a, an often over-missed detail.

And it is a heartbreaking detail. Luke tells us that immediately after the rooster crowed a second time, the Lord, the text says, the Lord turned and looked at Peter.

Jesus witnessed at least Peter's third denial. Now it seems that Jesus' trial has ended and he's being taken by the guards across the courtyard to his prison cell.

[14:59] His face is already black and blue from the guards who covered his face and beat him while yelling, prophesy. Prophesy.

Who hit you? That is the face that Peter saw after he denied Jesus for the third time to a harmless servant girl who posed zero threat.

Do you see yourselves in Peter? Now this is interesting. While the guards are beating Jesus up and yelling, prophesy, Jesus' prophecy to Peter to Peter is being fulfilled.

Isn't that interesting? But can you imagine the pain that it must have caused Jesus to see Peter, his closest disciple, possibly his closest friend, deny him when Jesus had just taken a beating for him? Now this probably hurt Jesus more than all of the prior blows Jesus received from the guards combined. Look at Peter.

[16:10] And so much for Peter's I'm different talk, right? His I'm better, his they may fall away, but not me. I get it. I'm with you to the end talk.

So much for his words. Not even Peter had the faith to back up his claims to be faithful. And listen, y'all, this is Peter, right?

This is Peter, one of the pillars of the church, the apostle of apostles. This is the guy who first professed that Jesus was the Messiah. He saw countless miracles performed.

He heard countless sermons delivered. He walked with Jesus for three years. He witnessed the transfiguration. This is the guy who would be renamed Cephas, which means the rock, because his sermon in Acts 2 would become the firm foundation.

It would become the rock on which the church was built. This is Peter. This is the guy who would be crucified upside down for the sake of the gospel.

[17:22] Now, if Peter, if Peter was unfaithful, if Peter was able to deny Jesus, what makes you think that you are somehow different?

What makes you think that you are somehow better than Peter? As if you get it, no one else does. My friends, don't be deceived. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. You see, every time you sin, you deny Christ. Sin, by its very nature, is a betrayal of God.

It's a betrayal of Jesus. It's a betrayal of Christ's redemptive work for you. So this means that every time you sin, every time you slander another person, every time you gossip about another person, you are denying Jesus.

Every time you care more about what others think of you than what God thinks of you, you are betraying Jesus. Every time your heart is greedy, every time it is lustful, every time it is slothful, every time it is bitter, you are denying Jesus.

[18:39] Every time you sin, you deny Christ, the one who loves you, the one who made you, the one who sustains you, the one who suffered for you. Do you see yourself in this portrait?

Let's turn our attention to the second scene. Okay, we're going to go with Jesus, Peter, James, and John into the Garden of Gethsemane. In this scene, we see a portrait of distraction.

Jesus takes Peter, James, and John. They're his inner circle. He takes them into this olive grove, the small olive grove called Gethsemane. And he has one purpose in mind as they enter this garden.

That purpose is this. They go into the garden to prepare themselves for the trials that await them. Okay? And they're about to face an array of trials and tribulations. Jesus tells them to watch and pray lest they fall into temptation.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus gives these three disciples two imperatives. He tells them to watch and to pray. And these aren't suggestions. These are commands.

[19:49] Jesus is saying, if you want to avoid falling into temptation, here's the secret sauce. Don't overcomplicate it. Watch and pray.

You have to be on your guard. You have to watch out for temptation. And you have to pray and pray and pray. But in Gethsemane, we see a stark contrast between Jesus and these three disciples. You see, Jesus knew what was about to happen to him. He knew he was going to be betrayed, arrested, mocked, beaten, and crucified. And he knew that his disciples were about to desert him and deny him.

And he knew that he was about to be alienated from his father for the first time in eternity. He was about to face an isolation that he had never experienced before. And yet, knowing this, Jesus also knew that if he was going to accomplish God's redemptive plan, he had to be prepared.

And so he had to watch and pray. And that's exactly what Jesus does. He watches and he prays and he prays and he prays. The disciples, on the other hand, they're fast asleep.

[21:05] They were incapable of one hour of true discipleship. One hour. Each of them, they're about to face an array of trials and temptations and tribulations, not just in the short term but long term.

Their life is going to be defined by trial. But in the garden, they neither watch nor pray. When they should have been vigilant, they were negligent.

When they should have been prayerful, they were prayerless. The disciples got distracted by material things. They were concerned about worldly things.

Do you see yourself in Peter, James, and John? Does this portrait of distraction apply to you? My friends, don't be deceived.

The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. There are so many things in this world that distract us. We get so fixated on the periphery that we lose sight of what's ahead of us.

[22 : 19] And my daughter, when she was in first grade, she raced, she entered into like a 50 meter race with five local schools. And my daughter is pretty fast.

And during the race, she was so focused on the kids running to her left and her right instead of focusing on the finish line that she ended up running a lot slower than she actually was.

And she performed a lot worse than she actually could have performed. Instead of focusing on the finish line, she was running, looking to her left and her right. And as a result, she was running with the pack.

And we do the exact same thing, don't we? We get so distracted by the things of this world. We get so distracted by the things that are periphery. We get so distracted by the people who are running to our left and our right when our eyes should be fixed on Jesus.

so they should be fixed on the finish line. We're always comparing ourselves to others. We're always coveting what others have.

[23 : 29] We're always so concerned about how others are living their lives that we neglect the two imperatives in Mark 14, to watch and to pray. You see, when we, like Peter, James, and John, struggle to do these two things, to watch and pray, we let good things distract us from the best thing.

We prefer to play in mud puddles when the beach is around the corner. We prefer to eat breadcrumbs when there's a feast on the table. We are so easily distracted.

This is not a pleasant picture of ourselves, is it? In our third and final scene, Judas shows up and he brings with him a small army and Judas portrays Jesus.

Judas portrays the one who just hours earlier put a towel around his waist, grabbed a water basin, dropped to the ground and washed Judas' feet.

Judas is betraying the one who just fed him bread and wine saying, this is my body which is broken for you. This is my blood which is poured out for you.

[24 : 49] Judas, one of the twelve, he got distracted by the things of this world and as a result, he denies Christ and he deserts his savior and friend in his hour of need.

Well, Peter, Peter is Peter, Peter, Peter will be Peter, he's just a hothead, right? Peter has a short sword on him. Peter draws his sword and he decides that he's going to fight these armed guards even though Jesus literally just told him in the upper room and in the Mount of Olives that what was about to happen had to happen so that the scriptures could be fulfilled.

And he strikes this man. Y'all do realize that Peter was not aiming for his ear. He took his sword, a short sword which is meant for stabbing and he tried to stab this guy in the face.

Now listen, after walking with Jesus, after learning from Jesus for three years, Peter still thought that attacking somebody, that killing somebody for Jesus was an acceptable solution.

But then things take another turn, right? And we see that prophecy from Zechariah 13 unfold before our eyes and it's hard to watch. I don't like verse 50.

[26 : 21] Verse 50 says, and they all left him and fled. Nobody stuck around. Nobody went with Jesus. Nobody was faithful.

Instead, Peter, James, and John, like Judas, they desert their Savior and friend. Do you see yourself in this portrait?

It's a portrait of desertion. It's not just a portrait of the disciples desertion. It's a portrait of us. Instead of sharing our faith with others, we do what the disciples did.

We leave them and flee. Instead of living out our faith before others, we fear their opinion of us.

And so we conform ourselves to their image. Instead of giving our time and talents to serve our community, to serve the least of these, we choose to stay in the comfort and security of our own homes.

[27 : 34] But Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?

And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the king will answer them, truly I say to you as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.

Every time you deny them, you deny him. You're not any different than Peter, James, and John. So what did Jesus get when he got you?

Well, I can't speak for you, but I can speak for myself. I know what Jesus got when he got me. He got a person who denies him every day, every time I sin.

He got a person who doesn't love others very well. He got a person who doesn't lead his family very well. He got a person who doesn't pray to him very much.

[28 : 50] He got a person who doesn't think about him very much. He got a person who is sometimes embarrassed of him. He got a person who is easily distracted by the things of this world.

He got a person who cares way too much about what other people think. He got a person who regularly chooses to eat bread crumbs when there's a feast on the table.

He got a person like the disciples, a person who denies, a person who is distracted, a person who deserts his sinless Savior and friend.

God. I got to say, y'all, Jesus got a pretty raw deal when he got me. Like Dorian Gray, when I see this portrait of myself, I want to wrap it up, put it in a secluded room, lock the door, and throw away the key.

I don't like this portrait, but I need to see it. it shows me my brokenness. It shows me my imperfections.

[30 : 06] It shows me my need for the gospel. I need to see it, but I still hate it. The good news is God hates it too.

God hates this portrait of me and you so much, in fact, that he would send his only son to become it. he sent his only son to live the life that I was required to live, that you were required to live.

He sent his son to die the death that we deserved so that our soul's hideous portrait could be replaced with the gospel of God's free grace.

This is what we call double imputation. Christ, or my sin, comes down on Christ, and his righteousness comes up and it hangs in my heart forever.

Listen, Mark 14 is an unpleasant picture. It shows us how undeserving the disciples are, were, of God's free grace, and in so doing, it shows us how undeserving we are of God's free and unmerited grace.

[31 : 23] God's grace. Listen, like the disciples, we are a people who betray, who deny, and desert Jesus.

But with the disciples, we are the ones to whom Jesus said in the upper room, this is my body broken for you, this is my blood poured out for you.

You will never fully grasp the enormity of God's hatred for your sin, and you will never grasp the greatness of God's love for you until you see not just the portrait of the disciples in Mark 14, but the portrait of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

It was the night of his betrayal, and Jesus knew what would follow. He knew what was coming. Jesus understood what his father was asking of him.

He understood what he would have to become. He understood all of the hideous portraits that he would have to bear. He understood the cup that he had to drink, and the thought of this was horrifying to Jesus.

[32 : 42] And so while his disciples are sleeping, while they're distracted, he prays, he asks his father if there was another way.

He says, Abba, father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. The text says that Jesus prayed this prayer over and over and over again.

And the response was always the same. Father, is there another way? no, son, there's no other way.

Father, please remove this cup from me. No, son, there's no other way. Please, father, please remove this cup from me.

No, son, there's no other way. You are the way. in order for your distracted sleeping disciples to come to me.

[33 : 50] You have to drink the cup. You have to become their curse. You have to go through the cross. You are the way and there is no other.

And Jesus responds, not my will, but your will. And then he drank every drop. He became our hideous portraits so that we could be united to his.

So let me ask you again, what did God get? What did Jesus get when he got you? Well, he got someone that he would drink the cup of God's wrath for.

He got a family that he would separate himself from God for. He got a church that he would experience God's displeasure for.

He got a kingdom that he would go through hell for. And he got a radiant bride that he would go through the cross for. God's love.

[35 : 00] My friends, Jesus was denied, betrayed, and deserted so that our Heavenly Father would never deny, betray, or desert us. And that, my friends, is the beautiful portrait that hangs in our hearts.

And that is the portrait that will never, ever come down. Amen. Amen. Let me pray for us. Heavenly Father, thank you. Thank you for being a good and gracious God to people like us.

We don't deserve your grace. We haven't earned it. But you lavish us with it anyway. We pray that we would see ourselves in the disciples, that we would see ourselves rightly, so that we would see ourselves in Christ.

We would see our need for a sinless Savior who did what we could never do, who lived the life that we were required to live, who died the death that we deserved. served. We pray that we would be a people who live out this good news, who don't fixate on the things of this world, but keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who is waiting for us at the finish line.

We pray all these things in his precious name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[36 : 18] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.